

# The Trial and Death of Socrates





# Background on Ancient Greece and Athens



- 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC
- The area we now know as Greece is a loose and disjointed collection of city states.
- Athens and Sparta are the biggest. Together they stave off invasions by the Persian kings Darius and Xerxes.





The rearguard action at Thermopylae by Spartan troops loyal to their King Leonidas is the Subject of the movie "300"

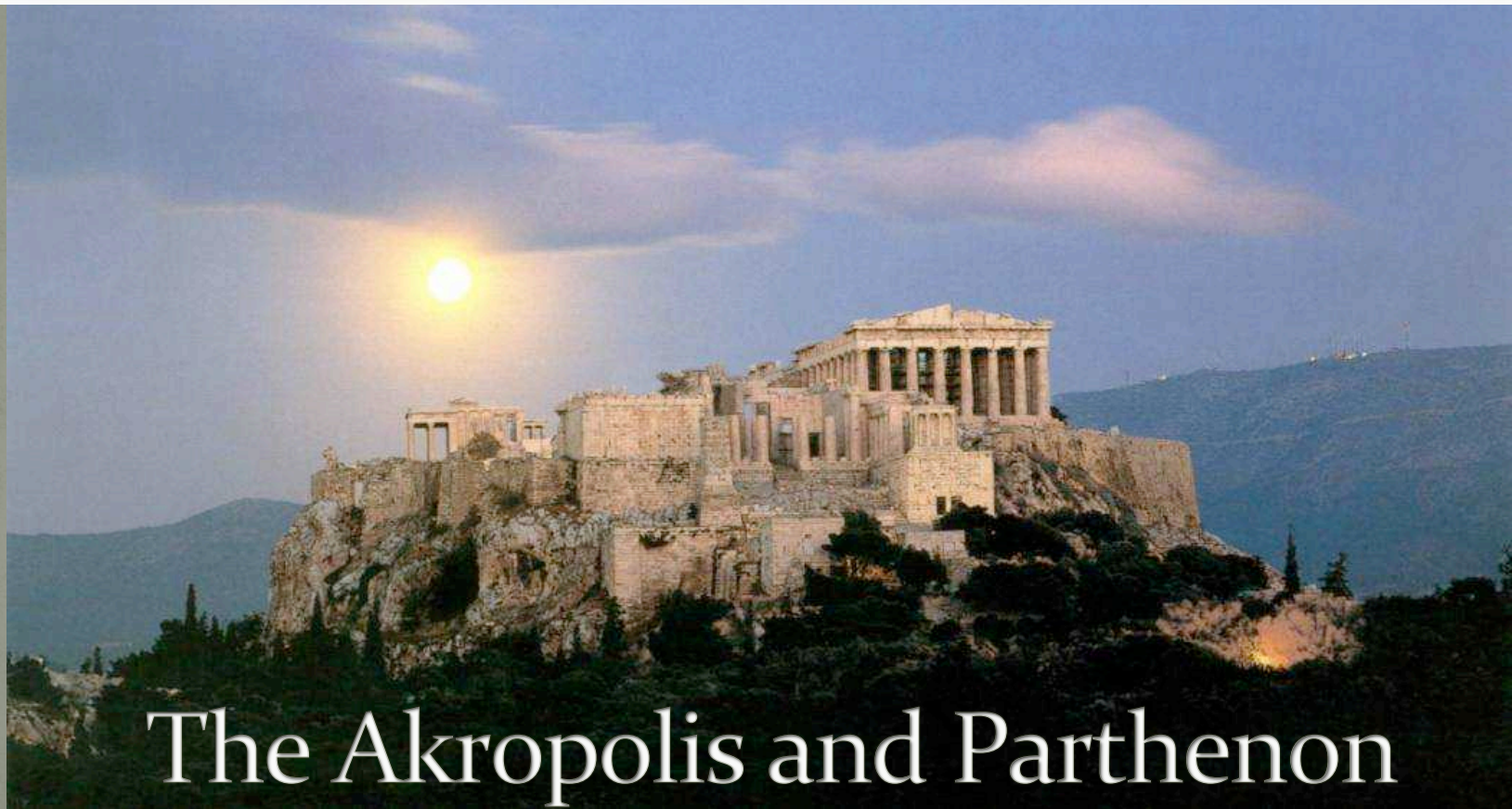


- After repelling the Persian threat Sparta and Athens turn on each other.
- Partly as a rejection of Spartan militarism and power Athenian citizens revolt and form the oldest documented "democracy" on earth.





- It is in this Classical Period of Greek History that Socrates lives (469-399 BC).
- He grows up in the Age of Pericles, an enlightened ruler of Athens who not only builds most of the structures still in existence on the Akropolis, including the Parthenon, but champions the causes of learning and art in Athenian society.



## The Akropolis and Parthenon

# Socrates the man.

- Socrates was a son of minor aristocracy.
- Socrates devoted his life to the public and private exploration of knowledge and philosophy (which literally means “love of knowledge”)
- As such he became a public figure in the arenas of ancient Athens.
- Socrates’ habit was to publically question the knowledge of others. This did not endear him to some who held power.



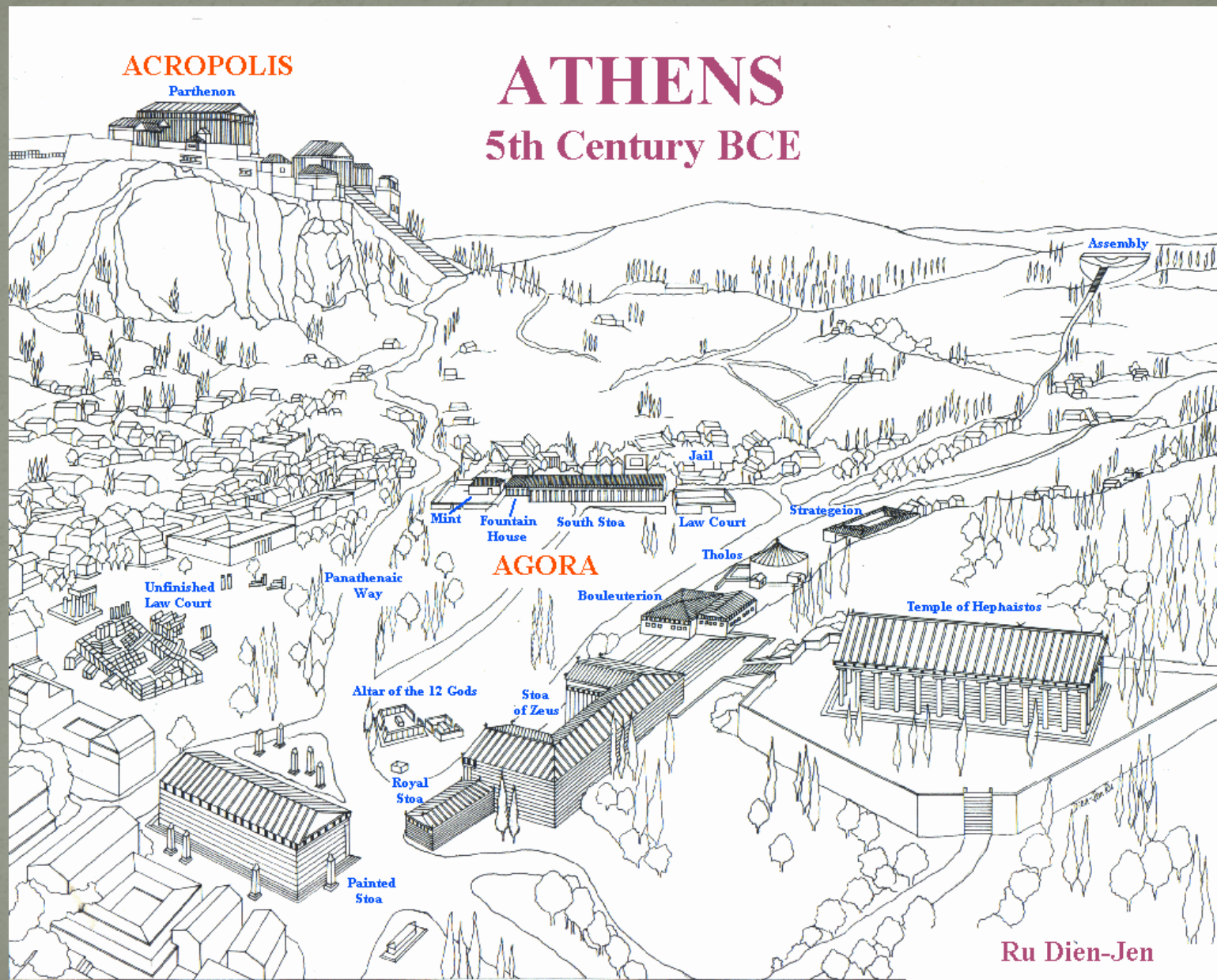
# Socrates the man.

- As a result, in his old age Socrates is indicted on charges of impiety and corrupting the youth.
- Many also hold that his indictment was due to his political affiliations during the recent Athenian defeat by Sparta and the oligarchic tyranny that followed.
- But the official charges are impiety and corrupting the youth.
- This sets the stage for the dialogue known as the “Euthyphro.”

# Socrates the man.

- Socrates is on his way to court for a preliminary hearing to answer the charges that have been brought against him.
- He meets Euthyphro on his way to the court as well.
- The setting for the dialogue is the Agora, or central marketplace of Athens.





Euthyphro





Euthyphro



# Setting the Stage for the Dialogue

- First, Socrates clears up why he is there. He has been brought up on charges by Meletus of corrupting the youth and impiety towards the gods.
- What is Impiety?
- For our purposes we may understand piety as goodness.  
To be pious is to be good, to be impious is to be bad.